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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary unit provides students in grades kindergarten through seventh grade an opportunity to understand diversity through a study of Africa as a diverse continent. The project is designed to provide all elementary students with cultural enrichment by exposing them to African music, art, storytelling, and movement. This project can be adapted to other cultures as a yearly project. The goal of the African Connection project is to cultivate an appreciation and awareness of the African culture. Student outcomes include: (1) developing an awareness of Africa as a complex continent; (2) demonstrating acceptance of diversity; (4) understanding the historic importance of Africa; (5) creating art and musical instruments; and (6) performing traditional dance. (EH)

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"AFRICAN CONNECTION"

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AFRICAN CONNECTION

The African Connection is an interdisciplinary unit that provides students in grades kindergarten through seventh grade an opportunity to understand diversity through a study of Africa as a diverse continent. The project is designed to provide all elementary students with cultural enrichment by exposing them to African music, art, storytelling, and movement. This project can be adapted to other cultures as a yearly project.

Participants

The entire elementary population of 800 students were involved in this project. The project could be adopted for use with any grade level. The participation and cooperation of the special subject teachers and classroom teachers is essential.

Program Goals

The goals of the African Connection are to cultivate an appreciation and awareness of the African culture. Students will derive understanding of the diversity of the continent through the integration of the disciplines of art, music, literature and movement.

Outcomes

The students will develop an awareness of Africa as a complex continent; demonstrate acceptance of diversity; understand the historic importance of Africa; create art and musical instruments; and perform traditional dance.

Procedures and Instructions

1. District specialists meet with a resource person who shares music, dance, art, and storytelling of Africa. The staff gains a better understanding of the African culture and gains resources to share with students and other staff members.
2. The special subject teachers coordinate instruction around the *African* theme for four weeks, at one week intervals. Through specific activities students learn about the African culture.
3. During this period, members of the community who have special knowledge of Africa are invited to share experiences with students as enrichment resources.
4. The project culminates with a performance by an African drummer who shares authentic rhythms and instruments. During this performance students display their creations and knowledge at various exhibits, creating a museum like atmosphere.

Time

This project took four weeks to implement because the four specialist rotate their schedule to visit all the schools they serve. The duration can vary depending upon the theme, resources and any special circumstances.

Resources

This project uses a variety of art materials including paper, paint, and markers. Other recycled materials are

needed to make African instruments such as egg cartons, oatmeal boxes, mesh onion bags, paper towel rolls, and discarded sheets or tablecloths.

Resource books and materials on Africa are a vital part of this project for students, staff and parents to use. A resource notebook is available upon request. Guest speakers on Africa should be invited to assist the specialists. The district elementary librarian would collect books and resources on African history, music, cooking, storytelling, animals, and culture.

Project Cost

The cost of the project depends largely on what can be obtained by volunteer speakers and donated or borrowed items. Most of our materials were from the existing budget although added expenses will be added for the initial resource person and culminating event performers.

Conclusion

This project brings the special subject teachers together and works to unify the schools in the district. *African Connection* is an exciting project that involves all students. It provides cultural enrichment and students learn about Africa through music, art, movement, and literature. As a result of this project students will recognize the value of diversity.

Bibliography

Resource aids for visual arts, architecture, music, dance, storytelling, tribal studies, economic development, politics, religions, travel, etc., of African nations are extensive and found for all regions, regardless of divisions, of this vast continent of 80+ countries.

As classroom teachers became involved, or as specialists found new materials, our resources grew extensively on a weekly basis. We also chose to rely on our community members to share their knowledge and personal experiences with students.

Because we wished to emphasize how individuals could overcome cultural barriers and create stronger bonds through diversities, we chose to work with the following resources. It was intended this list be viewed merely as a framework and not as our sole resource list.

Visual Aids-

- Apartheid: A Graphic Guide, Donald Woods and Mike Bostock
- Art of the Ndebele, Margaret Courtney-Clark
- Multicultural Art Book Alexandra Terizan
- Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears Verna Aardema

- A story, A story Gail E. Haley

- Ashanti to Zulu Margaret Musgrove

- Cooking the African Way Constance Nabwire

Audio Aids

- Olatunji - Nigeria
- Healing Drum - Ya Ya Diallo
- Kanda Bongo Man- Zaire
- King Sunny Ade - Nigeria
- Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Movement Aids -

- Ethiopian Games , Wossen Kassaye
- Popular Games for African Children, Gustave O. Twerefoo

Community Members and Guest Artists-

- Jane Gilbert - Workshop for Staff
- Michael Wingfield Cabildo - Concert
- Annie Boyden- Dance, Music, artwork
- Bernard Tshimangoley - Music/stories
- Kermit Elliot- slides/stories
- Jack and Diane Barnes - slides/artifacts
- Dan Krell - Peace Corps